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Statement on Behalf of the California Association of Wheat Growers  
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PRESENTATION AT CALFED PUBLIC LISTENING SESSION  
SEPTEMBER 22, 1999  
SACRAMENTO, CA

My name is Meredith Stephens. I serve as President of the California Association of Wheat Growers. I am part of a fifth generation family farm in Northern CA, and have been an environmental consultant for the past 25 years.

Of course, there are serious environmental problems in the Delta, and they will grow worse as our State is paved over to serve a population, which is expected to grow by some 14 million over the next 30 years. As a farmer and an environmentalist, I find that agriculture is being asked to pay an exorbitant price for a solution that will benefit largely urban interests and fish and wildlife. The farmer's payback is loss of critically needed water and loss of control over his land.

When it comes to mitigation for environmental impacts on agriculture, the language in the latest Phase II EIS/EIR becomes increasingly vague and clouded. Commitments to environmental restoration are clearly stated with words like "Will and "Must BE", while agricultural protection is described as "If Appropriate, "If Feasible" and "IF" in general. All of these "IFS" are to be decided in the future by CALFED. This is NOT ACCEPTABLE under CEQA or NEPA regulations and mandates. It leaves farmers as vulnerable as the most endangered and threatened of the species analyzed.

What Must be Done to Improve the CALFED Analysis and Process for Agriculture?

1. Clear Recognition that agricultural resources are part of the existing environment and must be protected just like other features of the existing environment.
2. Expand the range of alternatives to analyze more than just conveyance alternatives.
3. Ag impacts must be clearly described. How much Ag land will be fallowed or forced to shift to less intensive/less revenue crop? Describe Pimarray and Secondary economic losses to agriculture and its numerous support industries. Describe impacts on farm workers and impacted rural communities.

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4. Include Ag resource mitigation measures at the programmatic level. Deferring to future studies is not acceptable under the law or to CALFED's promises to protect Ag. Additional, timely storage must offset water losses to achieve mitigation.
5. Water rights associated with land and any water transfers must be kept under local control.
6. Avoid land grabs by focusing restoration efforts first on existing public lands.
7. Require that each acquisition be analyzed under CEQA and NEPA before action is taken  
(Unlike the thousands of acres that CALFED has already acquired with no environmental scrutiny).
8. Make CDFA a Responsible Agency under CEQA for protection of statewide agricultural resources.

**THE FUTURE OF AGRICULTURE HANGS IN THE BALANCE.  
WITHOUT FULL MITIGATION, TRANSFERRING WATER FROM  
AGRICULTURE TO PROVIDE HABITAT RESTORATION AND MORE  
WATER FOR INSATIABLE URBAN WATER DEMANDS WILL CAUSE  
IRREVERSIBLE LOSSES TO OUR FARMERS, OUR ECONOMY AND  
THE PEOPLE OF CALIFORNIA. THIS WILL TRULY BE THE REAL  
ENVIRONMENTAL TRAGEDY OF THE NEXT MILLENNIUM.**

**Thank you for listening.**